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Comments on Proposed bill No. 488 before the Transportation Committee on February 9, 2015
An act concerning availability of the Drug and Alcohol Education Class required for an operator's License.

For many years Connecticut, as most other states, has required minors to have some form of driver education. In 1989 The Connecticut the legislature created the safe driving practices course, which had to be five hours and the maximum fee that could be charged, was statutorily capped at \$25. The course is now eight hours at a cost of \$150, and required of all new license applicants regardless of age. Very few states even require such a course for adults, and certainly not at this price.

I believe this is an unnecessary financial burden on the citizens of this state. I am opposed to this class and am skeptical that it accomplishes much. This course is certainly a financial boost for the driving schools of Connecticut. In 2013, at my request, Senator Bartolomeo of the 13th Dist. filled Senate Bill 640 "An act concerning the safe driving practices course for new drivers over the age of eighteen". The bill only asked for a review of the affordability and effectiveness of the program, and develop alternatives. The bill died in committee, because of opposition from driving schools.

It was apparent from my prior experience that I couldn't make significant changes to this program, but I was still concerned about the financial burden to many people. Sen. Bartolomeo had an excellent idea, if we can't change the program, perhaps we could do something about the cost, and she came up with the proposal in this bill. I am very grateful to her for all of her help.

Senate Bill 488 offers an opportunity to those who are not able to afford this course through traditional driving schools. Under present law this class can only be taught at a facility, which is licensed by the Department of Motor Vehicles as a driving school. Certainly no driving school is going to go through the complicated process of licensing a branch to produce no revenue.

This proposal would allow The Department of Motor Vehicles to license an individual driving instructor the authority to teach the required Safe Driving Practices Course without profit to the public at a non-licensed facility. This would be similar to the Driver Safety Program taught by AARP, where one of their certified instructors teach an 8hr class in public places and issue a certificate that enables seniors to receive a discount on their car insurance. My proposal would allow a DMV certified instructor to issue a CS-1 certificate to a new driver in the same fashion. This would not cover the full driver education program or road lessons, only the required class.

Doctors, lawyers, accountants, and others are allowed to offer their services without charge to those who cannot otherwise afford them. I am asking you to give the same rights to a licensed driving instructor. Such authority would not have any effect on the manner a licensed instructor performs their service at a licensed driving school, and the certificate would be issued by the instructor not his/her employer.

I would also like to thank Rep. Michelle Cook of the 65th Dist. for co-sponsoring this bill, particularly regarding the availability of online classes. There are many online driving school programs available today, which can be produced at a significant cost reduction to live classrooms. Since the law requires attendance and not passing the required class, there is no reason a student must physically be in a classroom. In fact one issue of concern to DMV is class attendance in this program. They have to be assured that each student attends the full eight hours, and is presented all of the required material. An on line course solves this, since software can monitor actual viewing time and content. Only one CS-1 certificate will be issued for each tuition. I suggest the commissioner decide if the online course should only be for adults, or allow minors to take the online course with attendance at a parent class on the graduated driver's license. Since there is no facility or instructor time involved in an online course, this proposal would require all driving schools to offer an online course for fifty per cent of the in person instruction.

As Connecticut will now be processing many Drive Only Licenses, there will be a much greater need to reach a portion of our population that may be least able to afford this course. I urge your committee to take positive action on this bill and help the many citizens of our state who will need this assistance.

Dear Representative Guerrero, Senator Maynard, Senator Boucher, Representative O'Dea and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 6343: An act concerning the restoration of the Housatonic Railroad line. I am writing to you, as a resident of New York and Massachusetts, in support of updating and restoring passenger rail service through Northwest Connecticut, as described in Rep. Roberta Willis's proposed legislation HB 6343. This legislation is critical to the future of NWCT. Here are some of the benefits offered to the citizens of Connecticut: 1. Support existing businesses and increase tourism 2. Attract young families and entrepreneurs 3. Improve rail safety and decrease noise and vibration 4. Stimulate new local transport options and enterprises Yours sincerely, Jerry Herman, 135 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11238 / PO Box 512, Sandisfield, MA 01255.